



# Connecticut State University American Association of University Professors

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1615 Stanley Street • Marcus White Hall, Room 316 • New Britain, CT 06050

**February 17, 2022**

**Statement by Patty O'Neill, President of the Connecticut State University - American Association of United Professors (CSU-AAUP) on H.B. No. 5030: An Act Concerning Unemployment Benefits for Adjunct Faculty before the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee**

Good afternoon members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is Patty O'Neill and I'm the president of the Connecticut State University - American Association of United Professors (CSU-AAUP). CSU-AAUP is the faculty union representing more than 3,000 professors, coaches, counselors and librarians at our public state university system.

I am testifying here today **in favor of H.B. 5030**, which would make adjustments to unemployment rules to allow adjunct faculty to more easily access unemployment benefits between academic semesters.

CSU-AAUP also supports H.B. 5031, H.B. 5033 and S.B. 8.

Our union represents more than 1,500 adjunct faculty. These members are critical to the success of our universities and its students. They're often the first faces our students see as they start their college careers in their introductory courses, and some teach courses full-time professors don't have the expertise to teach.

Unfortunately, these members are not treated justly. They are underpaid, undervalued and unrecognized. The annual adjunct salary is less than \$24,000, less than minimum wage. Most adjuncts don't qualify for health insurance.

To make matters worse, adjunct faculty live in a near-constant situation of precarity. Most of their contracts last for a single semester and no longer. At the end of each semester, adjuncts will find out whether they'll have a job for the next season. Their classes can be canceled a week before the semester is set to begin.

These members are valuable to our communities. They work just as any other full-time professor does, offering office hours, mentorship and support to students. They kept teaching throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring our students could continue their education.

But we aren't making it easy for adjuncts to stay. If they continue to be forced to live in a constant state of fear of losing income for months with one week's notice, we could lose this vital part of the higher education workforce and face staffing shortages that would affect our students.

It's time we give adjuncts the respect they deserve. **H.B. 5030** could provide adjunct faculty with peace of mind. Right now, unemployment law in Connecticut singles out our educational employees and makes it nearly impossible for adjuncts to collect unemployment compensation. The state equates these members with full-time professors who have 10-month contracts, but we know the situations for adjuncts are very different.

H.B. 5030 requires institutions of higher education to document whether there is "reasonable assurance" of reemployment for adjunct faculty. This would allow more part-time faculty to collect unemployment compensation. Other states, including New Jersey, Washington and California, have passed similar legislation.

CSU-AAUP emphatically supports H.B. 5030 and urges its passage out of committee.

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**February 17, 2022**

**Statement by Patty O'Neill, President of the Connecticut State University - American Association of United Professors (CSU-AAUP) on H.B. No. 5033: An Act Addressing the Needs of Food-Insecure Students at Public Institutions of Higher Education before the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee**

Good afternoon members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is Patty O'Neill and I'm the president of the Connecticut State University - American Association of United Professors (CSU-AAUP). CSU-AAUP is the faculty union representing more than 3,000 professors, coaches, counselors and librarians at our public state university system.

I am testifying here today **in favor of H.B. 5033**, which would help address the needs of food-insecure students at the CSUs and the University of Connecticut.

CSU-AAUP also supports H.B. 5031, H.B. 5030 and S.B. 8.

Food insecurity among college students has always been an issue. But the pandemic has made matters worse.

In 2020, [a survey found](#) that more than one-third of students nationally had experienced food insecurity in the month prior. Each of the four CSU campuses host a food pantry for students.

What happens when our students are hungry? They're [more likely to](#) rate their health as "poor," struggle with depression and have lower grade point averages.

There is simply no argument against this fact: people need food to survive and thrive.

Our country is now facing record inflation rates. With the rising costs of rent, gas and other basic necessities, students are going to have even less left over for healthy foods. We need to address this problem head-on if we want students to stay enrolled, succeed in their programs and

graduate.

We must ensure students have their basic needs met so they can focus on learning. **H.B. 5033** would require the CSUs and UConn to study this problem and report to your committee on this issue. It would require our institutions to identify state and federal nutritional aid programs and help students apply for this assistance. It would also encourage our campuses to build or expand their food pantries.

Our students are the future of our state. We cannot expect our students, and therefore our state, to succeed if they are hungry. Instead of worrying about where they'll get money for their next meal, we need students to focus on their studies and their futures.

CSU-AAUP emphatically supports H.B. 5033 and urges its passage out of committee.